

IRS LOOKING FOR CUSTOMER FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICES

Washington - How would you rate the treatment you received during an IRS audit? How prompt was the service you received at an IRS walk-in office? The Internal Revenue Service wants to know. Your experience with the services that the IRS provides could be the basis for real improvements to the IRS's customer service.

In a new series of upcoming surveys, taxpayers who have dealt with the IRS will be asked to complete questionnaires to rate the service they received. The results of those surveys will be used to improve customer service at the IRS. While customer satisfaction surveys are not new to the IRS, past surveys that asked taxpayers to rate the IRS's services did not require respondents to have had any actual experiences on which to base their opinions.

"For the first time, we're looking at specific services through our customers' eyes," said IRS Commissioner Charles O. Rossotti. "It's time for the IRS to start looking at everything we do from the taxpayers' perspective, rather from our own viewpoint, so that we can provide first-rate service to our customers."

Last month, Rossotti unveiled a new concept of modernized operations for the IRS to deliver significantly improved service. The concept requires significant changes in five areas, including balanced measures of performance. "Our current measures are

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oriented toward IRS internal operations, and fail to account for taxpayer satisfaction. These surveys will help to provide the balance we need to measure the agency's performance," Rossotti said.

In the initial phase of the surveys, customers will be asked to rate services ranging from toll-free telephone and walk-in taxpayer service, to audits of employee plans and exempt organizations. Customers will also rate telephone and field collection services, audits of their individual tax returns, and the appeals process. In later phases, the surveys will be expanded to include other services.

The surveys were designed and are being conducted by a private contractor with extensive experience in survey design and implementation. These ongoing surveys will provide the IRS with customer service feedback at the district, regional and national level, and are expected to begin later this month.

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